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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 001167

SIPDIS

EUR/NCE FOR TANOUÉ, LYNN, AND FICHTE, PM/RSAT FOR GOROG,
PM/DTCC FOR PEARTREE, H FOR BORIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/08/2015

TAGS: [KOMC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH MFA: 10,000 ASSAULT RIFLES FOR PRIVATE USE?

REF: PRAGUE 1145

Classified By: Political-Military Officer Brian Greaney
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1) This is an action request, please see paragraphs 5 and 6.

2) (C) Summary: The Czech MFA licensing division has asked for confirmation that the USG wishes to allow a U.S. company to import 10,000 VZ-58 assault rifles for private sale to domestic consumers. Post requests guidance on the appropriate reply. End Summary.

3) (C) A reliable Embassy contact telephoned Pol-Mil Off August 4 to express Czech MFA concern about the possible transfer of 10,000 Czech VZ-58 assault rifles to the U.S. for private sale to U.S. consumers. The VZ-58 is the standard issue Czech Army assault rifle. The contact said that before issuing a favorable opinion on the transfer, the MFA wished to be sure that the United States actually wanted this deal to go forward.

4) (C) Contact provided the following information:
U.S. International Import Certificate number: 04-07233
-- Issuance Date: Sep 16, 2004
-- U.S. Importer: Century Arms, Inc, 236 Bryce Blvd., Georgia, Vermont 05454.
-- Exporter: CZ Export Praha S.R.O., Czech Republic
-- Description of goods: "Machine Gun, cal. 7.62x39, model VZ-58, made in Czechoslovakia, Magazines, 30rd, for the above machine gun, made in Czechoslovakia." (sic)
-- Quantity of goods authorized on U.S. Import Certificate: 20,000 guns, 80,000 magazines
-- Value of contract on U.S. Import Certificate: \$280,000 USD.

Czech Export Application
-- Producer: Cezka Zbrojovka
-- Exporter: CZ Export Praha s.r.o., Svatopluka Cecha 1283, 988 27 Uhersky Brod
-- "Volume of transaction:" 10,000 pcs accessories
-- Value of transaction: 3,500,000 CZK, 350 CZK per unit (\$14.64 USD per rifle)
-- Purpose of transaction: "sale in the civil market after modification into semiautomatic gun." ... "guns will be dismantled at the US customs store and only some of the parts will be used for the assembly of semiautomatic (single action) guns, as there is prohibited to sell automatic weapons in the US market." (sic)
-- Requested validity of the license: until June 30, 2006.

5) (C) Our initial internet research indicates that a U.S. International Import Certificate is valid for only six months after the date of issue (atf.gov/firearms/feib/guidebook.htm). However this guidance is dated 2003. Post seeks confirmation that U.S. International Import Certificate number 04-07233 is no longer valid for import of firearms into the United States. If that is the case, we will advise the Czech MFA that the U.S. importer cannot legally import these firearms into the United States with this certificate.

6) (C) The Czech MFA has recently been careful to ensure U.S. security interests are not impacted by its licensing decisions. It has sought to confirm with us on numerous occasions that arms transfers do not threaten U.S. security (reftel). In the last 30 days we have had to confirm to the Czechs that U.S. shipments of Czech military ammunition to Iraq and Georgia would not fall into the wrong hands. Our research indicates that the internet is a ready source of information on turning a semi-automatic rifle into a fully-automatic one. We also note that the U.S. International Import Certificate was issued only three days after the ending of the assault weapons ban. Embassy Prague requests guidance to answer ongoing Czech concerns about diversion of arms shipments. Specifically:
-- a) Does the USG allow the import of fully automatic assault rifles for conversion to semi-automatics?
-- b) Does the USG have current policy concerns relating to the possible diversion of such weapons for terrorist use within the U.S.? (Concerns that would cause us to reconsider issuing import certificates for the VZ-58?)
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